

Minutes for Redistricting Reform Regional Public Meeting – Waldorf
Charleston Senior Center
45 St. Patrick's Dr., Waldorf, MD 20603
September 29, 2015
6:30pm

Call to Order at 6:39pm

Attending: Alonzo Washington, Carol Ramirez, Steve Waugh, Walter Olson, Alex Williams, Sen. Joan Carter Conway, Ashley Oleson, Michael Goff

Not Attending: Tessa Hill-Aston, Chris Summers, Del. Jason Buckel

Walter Olson welcomes members to Waldorf

- Thanks Charleston Senior Center for hospitality
- Normally at this point go around and introduce the commission
- Will continue on as more people arrive
- On Aug. 6th Governor Larry Hogan created the Redistricting Reform Commission by executive order
- Will have public hearings throughout state and have report done by Nov. 3rd
- Testimony is going to be very helpful
- Two more regional meetings are coming up
- Next in Easton and Laurel
- Expert speaker is Todd Eberly
 - Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at St. Mary's College of Maryland

Walter Olson invites Todd Eberly to give presentation

Todd Eberly

- Believes in the end both parties share same goals
- In Maryland and Illinois democrats use redistricting to their advantage
- In Texas in North Carolina parties do the same
- A critique on Maryland districts is not a critique on the Democrat party
- Instead of allowing voters to choose their politicians, politicians are the ones choosing their constituents
- Adequate representation was a focus of the founders of our country
- Only direct democracy could work
- Only good and virtuous men could serve as representative
- Men like Hamilton and Madison believed we could select representatives
- Needed accountability that came through elections
- Tasked with representing people
- The elected represent us and we can fire them through election
- Of all the institutions the House of Representatives does the best job with this

- As Americans we should be unhappy with current process
- As Americans we should be demanding of better
- Without accountability we cannot expect representation
- In the end the incumbent has the advantage
- In safe seats the majority is protected, coupled with close primaries
- Incumbents are safe, their only fear is from within own party during primaries
- As a result we have seen republicans drift further right and democrats drift further left
- In 36 states state legislatures are in charge of drawing the line
- Want to see more states follow the lead of California and make redistricting nonpartisan
- May inspire other states to act in a similar fashion
- Would like to talk a moment about California
- For a map to be approved must have support of super majority
- Needs to abide by a set of standards
- Districts must be connected to one another
- Must be geographically compact
- Incumbents and political parties cannot be considered while drawing the lines
- The results of the reform in California had amazing results
- Between 2002 and 2010 53 seats time 5 elections
 - Previously party control of a seat change in only .38% of an election
- 14 of 53 seats are now considered to be competitive
- Another 20 of those seats come from states with nonpartisan approaches to redistricting
- A new approach to redistricting is needed
- Narrow and sprawling districts need to be addressed
- Instead of excuses we need reform

Questions by Commission Members to Todd Eberly

- Sen. Waugh asks Todd Eberly if there was voter increase in CA by redistricting?
 - Todd Eberly responds not that he knows of
- Walter Olson asks if he has studied other states beside CA?
 - Todd Eberly responds CA has been the main focus of his study
- Sen. Conway to Todd Eberly, is your main focus the lack of clarification of drawing the lines?
 - Todd Eberly responds when it comes to congressional districts MD has an absence of guidelines
 - As a step forward I think one of the things the commission should do is add clarification to the drawing of lines
- Del. Washington asks if states lines do not cross boundaries in CA?
 - Todd Eberly says guidelines say no, but very large geographic areas
 - Guidelines are more about breaking up counties and city, seek to minimize doing it
- Walter Olson asks outcome of Voting Rights Act in CA?

- Todd Eberly responds CA can't make benevolent attempts to draw districts that are not minority majority
- If you take a concentrated area of minorities you have to worry about violating Voting Rights Act
- The key question will be does this create an unfair advantage
- In MD the argument is there should have been another minority majority district and was denied the creation of another minority majority district
- Del. Washington asks another minority majority district that is congressional?
 - Todd Eberly responds yes, congressional

Walter Olson calls upon elected officials to speak

Delegate Tony O'Donnell

- First elected in 1994 election
- Currently the longest serving minority in House of Delegates
- Served in leadership roles
- Would like to thank commission and Governor Hogan for setting commission up
- Paramount to representation and democracy
- Has three recommendations:
 - 1. General
 - My opinion is an independent commission would be superior to the process they currently have
 - An overwhelming majority of Maryland citizens support this reform
 - A legislature in support to reform this as well
 - Hope is to get this done now to advance sensible fair legislation and make this reform a reality in Maryland
 - 2. State Legislative Redistricting
 - Although mathematical argument has been explained to him many times not buying it
 - Brief example
 - Every citizen in district 29 is represented by one member they vote for
 - In multi member districts each citizen has three members in the house of delegates that represents them
 - But in district 28 they have 3 members on standing policy committees
 - In reality if you can lobby 3 citizens and other people can lobby only 1 that seems unfair
 - If we go to single member districts we can create more fairness
 - 3. US House Seats
 - Recommended system for compact and contiguous state
 - If we went to compact and contiguous districts
 - Most of the complaints about teradactyl would be gone
 - Ran for congress and learned the nature of problems with redistricting
- Three simple reforms to make Maryland a leader in redistricting reform

Question by Commission Members

- Alex Williams asks how do you purpose the independent commission be composed?
 - Del. O'Donnell responds that he doesn't necessarily presume to know the best answer, but to look at other state models such as CA
 - We all need to work together in the long run
 - If we lead the way others will follow along

Delegate Matt Morgan

- Thank everyone for coming down to Southern Maryland
- Spoke in front of last redistricting commission
- Gave testimony on how we should be fighting
- Would like to share my story
- Ran against 24 year incumbent in 2010
- Lived in Benedict attached to St. Mary's Co.
- Asked board of election and heard compact and contiguous
- Lost in absentee ballots
- Somehow had special district drawn
- Looked at it as a personal challenge
- In Hughesville and Benedict the people were disenfranchised
- People overwhelming want this problem fixed
- Urges for single seat districts
- Points to map where he represents
- 3 different delegates representing land mass
- Wants representatives to be accountable

Question from Commission Member

- Del. Washington asks Del. Morgan to explain benefits of single member districts. Del. Washington states three member districts create more people on committees.
 - Del. Morgan says it is about accountability
 - Pay much more attention with 30,000 compared to 100,000 voters
 - Voters in my district have a direct connection
- Sen. Conway said voters were disenfranchised in Hughesville and Benedict because of land mass, but it's not about land mass it's about population. My question is what would you have done with Benedict and Hughesville?
 - Del. Morgan responds disenfranchised because not represented by delegate that's familiar with the area
 - If you're not interacting with people every single day how can you represent them
- Walter Olson asks how does it change the experience of running for election in three or one member districts?
 - Del. Morgan responds you end up leaving people out because you're not touching base or hearing concerns of all your constituents

Delegate Deb Rey

- Represents 29B
- Believes districts should be compact
- Should use natural boundaries to include county and city lines
- Go back to one man one vote
- Equal population in the district
- When she walked in was against an independent commission, but could support something like CA
- General Assembly should have to vote to approve the map
- Thinks General Assembly has to vote
- So people can be held accountable
- Her legislative district split the neighborhood to include incumbents house
- Whoever drawing the district should drive it to see if it makes sense
- Also for single member districts
- In her district delegates and senators have scholarships
- In multi-member districts could get more scholarship

Delegate Mark Fisher

- Thinks it would be a good idea to address Del. Washington's question about importance of one member district vs. three member district
- Charles Co. has an urban center and rural center
- Really two different counties
- Needs of rural are different from needs of urban centers
- Property rights and zoning rights could be different
- Receiving calls as a delegate from Calvert Co.
- People in rural tears are increasingly not being heard. Put into three member districts
- Tyranny of the majority
- Hear from farmers and others who have been in Charles Co. for hundreds of years
- Within Charles Co. folks would have been able to come up with better policy decisions
- Support independent commission
- Tyranny of the majority, not democracy, what Tocqueville warned about

Comment from Commission Member

- Sen. Conway believes that constituents in urban centers feel the same way. The current system has the map drawn, then it is reviewed by the court for legal, then goes to masses and they vote on what the legislators have done. Map is confirmed by constituents of Maryland.
 - Del. Morgan states when bringing up Charles Co. and rural tear, having single member district makes good sense, so good debate will come out of it
- Sen. Conway says a lot of problems with the legislative and congressional map, but doesn't agree with single member districts

Aisha Braveboy

- Former Delegate
- Address a couple of points

- Wanted to point out Sen. Anthony Muse wanted to be at meeting, but was unable to attend because of a conflict
- To the point that was made regarding the map being voted on
- The only map that can be voted on is the congressional map, so citizens can petition to referendum
- State legislative maps do not have to be voted on by legislature
- There is not the same checks and balances for legislative maps and that is something that needs to be change
- Only governor that has the type of power to draw the map – in Maryland
- Need to make some changes to that as well
- She voted against the congressional district map because it reduced influence over the growing minority districts
- In the past many legislators don't want to mess with congressional map, so there legislative district won't be messed up
- Legislative map should be adopted before the congressional map is made
- By changing the order that these maps are created by legislature could improve outcomes
- Believes that there has to be more guidance given to the congressional maps
- District 27 is one of the most egregious examples of districts
- Could have been more compactness in the way the lines were drawn
- In our constitution it permits the drawing of a 3 members district, a single member district, or a multi member district
- So happy the governor has decided to create the commission

Question from Commission Member

- Alex Williams in 3 member district in 25, do you have an opinion on what's fair?
 - Aisha Braveboy explains need guidance on and consistency across the board. The 3rd congressional district is the one we always talk about, the third congressional comes out of Baltimore and grabs minority voters in Montgomery Co. for purpose of making it a stronger democrat district. Unfortunately, what that did to Montgomery Co. create no minority majority districts in Montgomery County. This troubled people right in heart of the county. Montgomery is the most diverse county in the state, but if you look at representation it does not reflect that.

Walter Olson turns the comments to the public

Charlene Kriemelmeyer

- Lives in Dunkirk
- 27B and 5th congressional
- Wanted to thank Todd Eberly for presentation
- Desperately need independent commission for redistricting
- Thank elected officials for insights
- Talk about personal experience
- Current legislative and congressional districts disenfranchise the voters
- Instead grossly figured to ensure democrats in office will keep their votes

- Steny Hoyer is so sure the voters in Calvert Co. will be overrun by Prince George's Co.
- Never seen most of the national or state legislators speak at a Calvert Co. event

Ella Ennis

- Lives in Calvert Co. and member of central committee
- Grateful to Governor Hogan for creating commission
- If you look at map from 2010 it's easy to tell that we are the most gerrymandered district
- Congressional districts need to be equal in population and contiguous
- It legislative district 27B can't go through two other legislative districts without going through Patuxent river
- Overly populated
- Two legislative districts north of 27B are underpopulated along with legislative district 25
- This large deviation could have easily been avoided
- The delegate in 27B was decided by less than 800 votes
- It is unfair to have one candidate be elected
- In both areas of Prince George's Co. those two districts are overpopulated
- Not equal representation, it means candidates that run are at a disadvantage
- Need to control and make an effort
- Districts that are divided among multiple counties reduce the impact of voters concerns because no one county has enough votes to elect somebody
- Asks to design a fair process that is bipartisan

Fulton J. LeTourneau

- Reiterate with what Del. Morgan said
- The map looks all over the place and should be more compact

Erin Chase

- Student to voice opinion
- Senior at St. Mary's College of Maryland
- Served as intern
- Presented policy proposal
- Advocate for redistricting reform in Maryland
- What you don't hear is top ranking in gerrymandering
- At home residence in Harford Co., district 1 packed, Easton still in district 1
- Legislative priorities align better with Baltimore Co. and not the eastern shore
- Why should voters go to polls if they feel their vote won't make a difference
- When politicians are the ones holding the pens the real losers are the voters
- Urge voters to determine ways to reform
- Believes Maryland should consider model of Washington
- No district may be amended by 2% of the population
- Thinks it's imperative not all power is stripped from the majority party
- Sore losers should not be the voters
- Maryland should aim to be a role model for other states

Charles County Commissioner Reuben Collins

- Reflects on issue when he was counsel to NAACP
- In 1998 was part of bipartisan discussion
- Representing the republicans was the Lt. Governor
- What was very clear about those discussions was a focus on redistricting that had minority voting power
- Commend governor for taking a lead on recent Supreme Court case, because of that lawsuit this idea was brought to the front
- In support of creating independent commission
- A lot of issues revolve around Charles Co.
- Benefited from urbanization of Charles Co.
- First African Americans represented to Charles Co. Board of Commissioners
- Point want to make to body is minority voting rights are part of the process
- Recognize robust democratic districts at dispense of ensuring minority districts were in place
- Proposal to make a minority district in place
- There is some degree of difference in ideology
- Look at one man one vote and how it impacts how we establish districts in Maryland
- Encourage continued feedback in community

Thomas DeKornfeld

- On Sep. 14th organized a group of friends to run about 30 miles
 - Ran through congressional district 3 220 miles, started Friday morning and got there Sunday afternoon
- Had about 15 people
- Very diverse group
- Not very political, but time it was done had very strong feelings about gerrymandering.
- Would urge support for compactness
- Call to commissions attention how invisible these borders are to people
- If you had signs welcoming you to each district

John Perryman, League of Women Voters

- Redistricting creates legislative and congressional districts that are transparent
- Should disappoint us that it is not transparent and doesn't share the interests of voters
- Panel by Maryland Public Policy school mentioned how redistricting worked in the House
- Delegate Braveboy directed our intention to district 4
- Going forward a couple of recommendations
 - Lines of congressional and state should be drawn by independent commission
 - No elected official or party dominate
 - Congressional districts should conform to same characteristics as state territories
- Leaves information for commission members

Culver S. Ladd

- Independent commission should develop congressional and state district lines

- Could do something similar to CA
- Chance to lead nation

Tommi Makila

- Strong dedicated democrat
- Attest to blind bipartisanship
- Embarrassed to be a Maryland Democrat
- Would like to point out to democrats they should get behind reform
- Now dominant position in state will end
- Assuming we will reform
- New system should have independent commission
- Knowing how powerful democrat machine is in Maryland it will be difficult
- Instead of independent commission, use system similar to Iowa
- Addresses are not allowed to be used
- Maps can be voted up or down
- Final maps are voted on by the courts
- Believe Iowa model has many advantages
- Very cost effective
- System that utilizes modem mapping

Mark Arness

- Candidate for congressional district 5
- Has spoken with Mark Plaster who has a bus to drive around district because he has 4 counties
- Can't tell who is in which house because streets are divided
- Instructed to talk about history of gerrymandering
- Term of gerrymandering
- Comes from Elbridge Gerry
- Troublesome
- Doesn't serve the need of constituents
- Serve need of incumbents to get them elected
- Serve own interests to draw maps in very clever ways
- Believes it's a violation of voters rights to be represented
- Defeat purpose of the framers
- Have done a disservice to the voters
- People don't have someone they can go to
- In interests of candidates
- Approval rating of 12% how do they get elected every time?
- Low turnover and wait

Norma Mary

- Very pleased with discussion and pleased with ideas
- Hope to have an independent commission

Nor Heaverly

- Member of Charles Co. Republican Central Committee
- No rhyme or reason for maps
- Need to look at citizens we serve and make it fair for everyone
- One party system
- Thing of career politicians needs to stop
- Very rarely serving
- See progress now that Hogan and Rutherford are in Annapolis
- A lot of people left Republican people so they had people to vote for
- Need youth to be representing us

Walter Olson thanks everyone for their input, encourages public to submit comments by email/website

Motion to approve minutes next week

Alex Williams thanks everyone for attending, great to see everyone

Meeting Adjourned 8:37pm